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Biennale
dell'immagine
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Switzerland

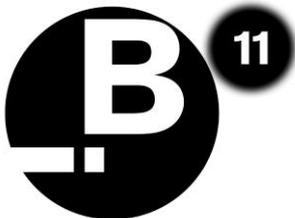
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BIO OF BORIS MIKHAILOV AND ARNOLD ODERMATT

BORIS MIKHAILOV *Temptation of Death*

Temptation of Death is the latest cycle of works by Boris Mikhailov. It is made up of more than 150 diptychs featuring a combination of images from the past Together with new photographs produced by the Ukrainian artist inside an enormous crematory built in Kiev during the Soviet era. The abandoned architecture of this place – and the unfettered nature which in such a short time has taken back over – provide the starting point for the whole project. The diptych structure through which it is articulated immediately evokes a constant state of uncertainty, ambiguity and change. As for his subject, Mikhailov bases this new monumental work on the theme of the passage, investigated in all its countless aspects from just as many different points of view: 1) the passage between the two photographs of each diptych, which suddenly come into contact/confrontation/collision here, unleashing unexpected meanings and formal coincidences; 2) between the old and the new, which blend together and question the very concepts of (narrative) linearity and evolution; 3) between the celestial heights of the spirit and the mere concreteness of the flesh, of human waste and foolishness; 4) between the communist past and the capitalist present, both portrayed as corrupt systems doomed to failure; 5) the passage between life and death.



ARNOLD ODERMATT *The Biennial Selection. 32 Photographs for Venice 2001*

In 2001, 32 photographs by Arnold Odermatt were displayed at the Venice Biennale. This show features the same selection of images, providing a fundamental moment of passage both for acknowledgement of the work of the Swiss photographer on the international stage, and also for the broadening of the very notion of photography within the art system. Odermatt's balanced shots were not in fact originally designed to end up on the walls of a museum, but represent the results of the documentation undertaken by a bright policeman who, at the end of the 1940s, had the idea of accompanying his reports on road accidents with visual proof. The multiple functions of photography overlap and clash with one another, just like the battered cars before him on the roads. Odermatt discovered the rigorous poetry inherent to this documentation, and over the course of three decades, put together a unique catalogue of the results of transformative events as powerful as they may be terrifying: unforeseeable sculptures, imbued with energy, come together on the road in a single instant. Harald Szeemann, director of the Biennale, thus underlines this aspect: "We witness [...] the wonderful transformation of a police officer into a man with an attentive gaze who seizes the opportunity to transform an accident into a visual feast."

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